

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6612
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
DOD
CINCPAC
COMIDEASTFOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1597

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, PINS, SO, US
SUBJ: SOMALI GENERAL URGES CLOSER MILITARY TIES

REF: MOGADISCIO 1573 DTG 121010Z JUL 78

SUMMARY: VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE OMAR HAJI URGED A COURSE OF CLOSER MILITARY TIES BETWEEN THE GSDR AND THE USG DURING A MEETING AT HIS INITIATIVE ON JULY 12. THE SOMALI GENERAL ANNOUNCED SOMALIA STOOD READY TO RECEIVE US NAVAL VISITS. HE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN US TRAINING FOR SOMALI OFFICERS, AND HOPED AN EXCHANGE OF MILITARY ATTACHES WOULD FACILITATE THAT PROCESS. HE RAISED THE SUBJECT OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL OPPOSITION, AND ARGUED THAT VERY FEW POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE HELD BY THE GSDR. THE SOMALI GENERAL SAID HE APPRECIATED US CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. HE SAID HE WOULD ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE EMBASSY, BUT WARNED
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IN CLOSING THAT TIME WAS RUNNING OUT ON SOMALIA. HE DID NOT MENTION THE US MILITARY SURVEY TEAM, BUT THIS WAS CLEARLY THE UNSPOKEN ITEM ON HIS AGENDA.

1. VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE BRIGADIER GENERAL OMAR HAJI MOHAMED CALLED IN THE CHARGE JULY 12 TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT STATE OF U.S./SOMALI RELATIONS WITH EMPHA-

SIS ON MILITARY COOPERATION. THE SOMALI GENERAL OPENED THE SESSION BY THANKING THE CHARGE FOR HIS PART IN BRINGING CODEL LEGGETT TO SOMALIA, AND REMARKING THAT HE HAD VERY MUCH ENJOYED THE VISIT OF THE TWL CONGRESSMEN WHO HE SAID, WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK, PROVED TO BE MORE PATRIOTIC SOMALIS THAN HE WAS HIMSELF. CHARGE REPLIED IT WAS THE SOMALI HOSTS WHO WERE DUE THANKS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THE CODEL LEGGETT VISIT. THE GENERAL THEN ANNOUNCED THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOMALI DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC'S (GSDR) READINESS TO RECEIVE U.S. NAVAL SHIP VISITS AS REPORTED IN REFTEL.

2. GENERAL OMAR THEN SAID HE WAS AWARE THERE HAD NOT BEEN VERY CLOSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOMALI MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, BUT HE SAID THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE HAD EARLIER BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH OTHER DUTIES, AND NOW THE SITUATION IS HAPPILY CHANGING FOR THE BETTER. HE SAID THE GSDR HOPED TO ACCREDIT A MILITARY ATTACHE TO WASHINGTON SOON, ALTHOUGH THE CANDIDATE HAD NOT YET BEEN SELECTED. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE GSDR WAS PREPARED TO RECEIVE A US MILITARY ATTACHE. HE INDICATED THAT ATTACHE WOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE SOMALI MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. (UPON ESCORTING THE CHARGE FROM THE BUILDING AT THE CLOSE OF THE MEETING, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS COL. ABOUKAR AKA ABDI KADIR OBSERVED THAT THE GSDR UNDERSTOOD THE CANDIDATE

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FOR THE US ATTACHED ASSIGNMENT IN MOGADISCIO WAS AN ITALIAN SPEAKING OFFICER NOW POSTED IN ROME. CHARGE SAID THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME DISCUSSION OF SUCH A TRANSFER IN THE PAST, BUT THAT TO THE EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE, THE US HAD NOT YET DECIDED TO NOMINATE A CANDIDATE. ABOUKAR SAID HE THOUGHT ITALIAN WOULD BE A MORE USEFUL SECOND LANGUAGE THAN ARABIC IN WORKING WITH THE SOMALI MILITARY.)

3. THE SOMALI GENERAL THEN PICKED UP SOME OF THE THEMES GENERAL SAMATAR STRESSED TO CODEL LEGGETT DURING THEIR CALL. IN PARTICULARLY GENERAL OMAR STRESSED THE GOAL OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PEOPLES OF "WESTERN SOMALIA". CHARGE LISTENED PATIENTLY AND AFFIRMED THAT HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THE GSDR POSITION. GENERAL OMAR THEN ASKED FOR THE CHARGE'S OPINION OF THE CODEL VISIT TO THE SOMALI NATIONAL MILITARY ACADEMY AND THE 2ND ARMORED BRIGADE. (SEPTTEL ON THIS ASPECT OF THE CODEL TRIP FOLLOWS.) CHARGE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS AN IMPORTANT FIRST, AND THAT THE CONGRESSMEN WERE WELL SATISFIED. CHARGE THEN COMPARED THE APPARENT ASPECTS OF THE MILITARY EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

GENERAL OMAR SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THE USG WERE TO HELP THE SOMALI MILITARY ACADEMY. HE EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN SENDING SOMALI MILITARY STUDENTS TO SOME US MILITARY SCHOOLS, AND ADDED THIS WAS A SUBJECT HE HOPED THAT THE RESPECTIVE MILITARY ATTACHES COULD ADDRESS.

4. TURNING TO AN ENTIRELY NEW SUBJECT, THE SOMALI GENERAL THEN SAID THE US WAS NO DOUBT AWARE THAT THERE WERE SOMALI DISSIDENTS IN NAIROBI, ROME, LONDON, AND IN THE UNITED STATES WHO SPOKE OUT AGAINST THE GSDR. GENERAL OMAR SAID SOME OF THESE PEOPLE PORTRAYED THEMSELVES AS THE ONLY SOMALIS WHO COULD INTERPRET THEIR COUNTRY TO THE WEST, OR TO THE EAST. HE SAID THEY VACILLATED, TURNING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION AS THE OPPOR-
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TUNITY SUGGESTED. "I CAN ASSURE YOU", HE CONTINUED, "THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO OR THREE POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THIS COUNTRY." THE GENERAL SAID REPORTS OF MASS ARRESTS AND TORTURE WERE UNTRUE. MANY FORMER GOVT. LEADERS HE ADDED, HOLD RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN THE GSDR. NO ONE IS TORTURED, OR DETAINED UNNECESSARILY HE SAID. OUR POLICY IS ONE OF HUMANE TOLERANCE, THE SOMALI GENERAL ASSERTED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOGADISCIO 1597

5. CHARGE USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE THAT THE US HAS SOME FRIENDS AMONG THOSE IN CONFINEMENT IN THE GSDR. THESE PEOPLE, THE CHARGE CONTINUED, ARE NOT OUR FRIENDS BECAUSE THEY ARE OPPONENTS OF THE GSER, BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE RESPONSIBLE LEADERS OF THE SOMALI NATION AT A TIME WHEN WE WERE ENGAGED IN HELPING THAT NATION DEVELOP ITSELF AS WE ARE SIMILARLY ENGAGED WITH THE GSDR TODAY. CHARGE SAID HE WOULD BE LESS THAN CANDID TO DENY THAT US/SOMALI RELATIONS WOULD BE IMPROVED IF THE USG WERE ABLE TO SAY WITH AUTHORITY THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE IN GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-TREATED.

6. GENERAL OMAR SAID HE APPRECIATED THE US CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, BUT ADDED THAT SOMALI SOCIETY UNLIKE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN THE WEST HAD NOT DEVELOPED TO THE POINT WHERE DISSENT COULD BE PERMITTED. HE ALSO ASSERTED THERE WERE A NUMBER OF COMMUNISTS OR "STOOGES OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SOVIET UNION" WHO WERE PREPARED TO DO MOSCOW'S BIDDING, AND THESE PEOPLE, HE SAID, SIMPLY COULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO JEOPARDIZE THE SECURITY OF THE GSDR AT THIS TIME. MOREOVER, HE CONTINUED, A NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE CONFINED FOR CRIMINAL, NOT POLITICAL ACTS.

7. IN CLOSING THE GENERAL SAID HE WOULD ALWAYS BE AVAILABLE TO THE EMBASSY IF ANY PROBLEM AROSE, OR IF IT WERE DESIRABLE MERELY TO COMPARE VIEWS. THE SOMALI OFFICER, ACCEPTING THE CHARGE'S SUGGESTION, SAID HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO CONTINUE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH AMBASSADOR LOUGHRAN ON THE LATTER'S RETURN. GENERAL OMAR COMPLIMENTED THE EMBASSY FOR ITS ROLE IN FACILITATING THE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. HE SAID HE KNEW THAT AT EVERY LEVEL IN THE GSDR THE EFFORTS OF INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN OFFICERS WERE APPRECIATED. HE AGREED THE TREND OF IMPROVEMENT WAS POSITIVE, AND SAID HE HOPED THE COURSE ITSELF WOULD HAVE FEWER DETOURS IN THE FUTURE. HE WARNED THE CHARGE THAT A SMALL COUNTRY LIKE SOMALIA COULD NOT SURVIVE INDEFINITELY WITHOUT FRIENDS, AND THAT TIME WAS RUNNING OUT.

8. CHARGE THANKED THE GENERAL FOR HIS GRACIOUS COMMENTS, BUT OBSERVED IT WAS ALSO THE TASK OF DIPLOMATS TO

ACCURATELY CONVEY FACTS AND POLICIES, WHETHER SUCH WERE
GREETED AS GOOD OR BAD NEWS TO THE LISTENER. CHARGE
SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT IN THIS CONTEXT TO REMEMBER THAT
THE PROPOSALS ADVANCED BY CHAIRMAN LEGGETT WERE HIS
OWN. CHARGE SAID THE CONGRESSMAN WAS AN IMPORTANT
LEGISLATIVE LEADER, AND WOULD LOBBY ENERGETICALLY FOR
HIS PROGRAM, BUT FOR THE MOMENT HE SPOKE ON BEHALF
OF HIS OWN INITIATIVE AND NOT THE USG.
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9. COMMENT: GENERAL OMAR MADE NO MENTION OF THE US
MILITARY SURVEY TEAM, BUT IT WAS FAIRLY CLEAR THAT
THIS WAS THE UNSPOKEN ITEM ON HIS AGENDA. HIS COMMENTS
ON DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE
UNEXPECTED, BUT CHARGE THOUGHT THE OPPORTUNITY TO
CALL ATTENTION TO US POLICIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS TOO
GOOD TO PASS UP. THE SOMALI GENERAL WAS VERY CORDIAL
THROUGHOUT THE HOUR AND TWENTY MINUTE MEETING. HE
SPOKE IN SOMALI, BUT ALSO HAS SOME COMPREHENSION OF
ENGLISH. COL. ABOUKAR DID THE INTERPRETING.
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